

### **"Most of the Negroes in the South"**

Most of the Negroes in the South have public school advantages. In the state of Arkansas the average time of schooling in the country districts is about ninety days. I have made some investigation, and I find from the reports of the Negro teachers that the average attendance of a Negro pupil in my state is about fifty-five days a year; so you see a Negro child has to get his education in a very fragmentary fashion. And these schools are taught during the summer months, the most unfavorable season of the year. The roads are so bad in the South, beginning the first of January, that they are practically impassable, and the children who need it the most do not attend.

Now, just a word with reference to the Negro's opportunity for work. He furnishes the entire labor for the South. This is true in the city as well as in the country. I suppose the northern man is impressed first of all with the fact that the Negro is seen on the streets at work. I suppose when Mr. Hartshorn went South he saw the Negro on the streets, and on the plantation planting corn. He is the real laborer of the South.

### **The Evil of Drink among the Negroes**

There are some evils which I think ought to be mentioned in this connection. I will mention some of the evils and will let you dig the rest out for yourselves. The first I have noted is the evil of drink. It is the curse of a great many of the laborers, because the practice is for the overseer or man who runs the plant to furnish the laborers with whiskey, in order, as they claim, to keep him at his work. The months of October and November, or November and December, are the most perilous times for the Negro of the South, because it is the time when he is raising his crops and getting his money; that is, he harvests his crops during these months, and that is the time he spends most for whiskey. It is a fact that large numbers of them die, not only the men, but the women and children as well. I think those who have been in the South at these seasons of the year will bear me out in this statement.

### **The Prison System a Menace**

Another evil that we are confronted with, and I am sure it is in the minds of all here, — and it is in the state of Georgia, — is the prison system. A large number of young Negro boys and girls are brought up to these courts and are sentenced to farm and mountain farms of the South, and they go and stay from thirty

and sixty to ninety or one hundred and twenty days, and at the end of that time they have become suspicious characters, and upon release they are often carried into court again and sent to the farms again, and from then on they go continually. I don't know that we have facts that they turn into criminals, but I am inclined to think that many of the crimes are attributed to this class of young Negroes who have been made into ordinary criminals by this system of imprisonment in many of the southern states.

There is one good thing in the future of the Negro of the South. I think it is generally conceded in many sections, and in every section I know of, that the Negro is given the opportunity to purchase property. He is encouraged to do so by the white people in the community. He is encouraged to buy farms. It has been my privilege to work with some of the leading banks engaged in selling the Negroes lots in certain sections of the city. They are really anxious to acquire property and have homes, and this takes me to the fact of the truth of Dr. Boyd's statement a little while ago, that the Negro is not only anxious to be himself in charge really, but the tendency is to thoroughly establish himself as well. He is encouraged to do this by the white people. He is encouraged to segregate and to have property with other Negroes. In the country places, certain sections are given him that he may farm and till.

### **Many Negroes are Doing Well**

I came from Memphis with Mr. Martin and Mr. Banks, who have been in business for fifteen years, and they tell me that many of the Negroes and the poorer people of Memphis have gone in there and taken up some of the richest land on the Mississippi River. They are in there doing well. They have a bank and two or three large cotton gins, oil wells, and straw mills, and Mr. Banks, who is the cashier of the bank, is employed by Banks & Martin to give the rating of the farmers. The man who is the station agent and the telegraph operator is a Negro, and the railroad company say that he is one of the most reliable men that they have in my own state.

In Hempstead County I spent two weeks, and there is a large section of country there that is owned entirely by the Negroes, several thousand acres of land. The Negroes are buying twenty, forty, sixty, and one hundred acres and building nice homes. I spent several days in one, and it was very nice. Dr. Mason is here, and he will bear me out that they say in that community